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C O N F I D E N T I A L PRAGUE 000691

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

EUR/SCE FOR MFOOKS AND ASTINCHCOMB, EUR/CE FOR ATRATENSEK

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TAGS: PREL PGOV BK EZ EUN  
SUBJECT: CZECH SHARE USG CONCERNS ON BOSNIA

REF: STATE 113894

Classified By: POLEC Counselor Charles O. Blaha for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (SBU) Czech National Coordinator of the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe Pavel Svitil commented that the Czechs share our concerns regarding the deteriorating situation in Bosnia. While Bosnia is on the agenda for the November 10 GAERC, the Czechs plan to revisit this topic, a key Czech EU Presidency priority, during future GAERCS since a number of critical events will fall during the first half of 2009. They are planning for Bosnia to be on the February GAERC given the March EU budget discussions, as well as their interest in discussing Bosnian reform progress and the Peace Implementation Council (PIC) 5 2 agenda.

¶2. (SBU) On the topic of Bosnian constitutional reform, Svitil emphasizing that this is "strongly needed," especially in order for Bosnia to achieve substantive reforms in other areas, a critical requirement for eventual EU membership. Svitil acknowledged that now is perhaps not the best time to reopen discussions on Bosnian constitutional reforms and that the EU has work to do to more clearly define the reforms that the EU expects of Bosnia.

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OHR Lajcak - Status Quo Can't Continue Much Longer  
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¶3. (C) On October 27 High Representative and EU Special Representative (HR/EUSR) Miroslav Lajcak met with Czech PM Topolanek, DPM Vondra and FM Schwarzenberg in Prague. According to Katarina Rychtarikova of the MFA South and South East Europe Department, who accompanied him at these meetings, Lajcak emphasized that the status quo in Bosnia cannot continue, that there needs to be a full redefinition of the international community's engagement and that the Office of the High Representative (OHR) needs to be reshaped. Since the mandate of the OHR expires and will be transformed in June 2009, Lajcak discussed some possible shifts in responsibilities, which he believe may help improve coordination and the role of his office. One idea he floated with the Czechs was a possible shift of the OHR's Bonn powers (which allow the OHR to enact governmental changes) to someone based outside of Bosnia, but within the current EU leadership in Brussels, while leaving the EUSR in Bosnia with day-to-day responsibilities. Lajcak will discuss the role of the OHR as well as the current situation in Bosnia with the EU Foreign Ministers at the November 10 GAERC.

¶4. (C) Comment: The Czechs attach great importance to achieving stability and eventual EU accession for the countries of Western Balkans. Given these priorities, the Czech EU Presidency during the first half of 2009 could be a rare opportunity to more fully advance USG priorities in the Balkans with a like-minded EU partner.

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